Reflection 3

4/6/2016

When I imagine myself being an ESL teacher, I am most anxious about the obstacles that present themselves when instructing ELLs. For my last reflection I’d like to address some common difficulties faced in the ESL classroom and solutions for overcoming difficulties. Since ESL students are so unique and have individual needs, there could be a multitude of difficulties to overcome.

A widespread obstacle to learning English is that students speak more of their native language than English. This comes naturally to them, and often their native language is the only language spoken at home. The more the students communicate in English the faster and further their English will develop. There are some simple strategies to encourage students to communicate using English like using positive reinforcement/token economy. Something as simple as having a sticker chart, and every lesson that a student does not speak in their native language you let them place a star on the chart. Stars equal prizes. Having an ESL student pair with an English-only speaking student for an activity is effective as well (http://busyteacher.org/12794-7-most-common-esl-problems-how-to-solve.html).

When students become bored or unmotivated to learn English, it can be a major setback in their progress. It is important to use Gardner’s theory of multiply intelligences, realia, and real-life situations to keep their attention and peek their interest. By assessing a student with Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences, you will know what types of instruction your ELLs respond to in the best way. Using realia and real-life situations peeks the interest of any student. Teachers should find out what their ELLs interests are like soccer, cooking, or money, and then use that information to design lessons around personal interests (http://busyteacher.org/12794-7-most-common-esl-problems-how-to-solve.html).

Kathleen Jones, ESL instructor for Clinton City Schools, told me personally that the hardest part of her job is struggling to communicate with parents. Communicating with parents who speak English can be frustrating. When you add a language barrier to the mix, it makes it nearly impossible to have effective communication. There are strategies for engaging ELL families. Learn about your ELLs background. Find out information like what country you ELLs come from, educational background of their families, and traumatic events their families may have experienced. Always use a home language survey and add questions to it to discover more about your students. Consult a translator, or at the least use tools like Google Translator, to send home papers written in students’ native languages. ELL parents can become confused, frightened, or agitated by not being able to communicate with school staff or read school signs. Make sure parents know how to get into your school building, post signs in their native language, consult bilingual staff if possible, create a welcome DVD in multiple languages, and inform parents that they are welcome to bring an interpreter with them to school meetings. Parent communication is crucial (http://www.colorincolora do.org/sites/default/files/Engaging\_ELL\_Families\_FINAL.pdf.).

Although, I have many more concerns and questions about being an ESL teacher, these are a few of my main concerns. Understanding methodologies, common concerns, teaching strategies, assessment strategies, and tools for teaching ESL students is overwhelming, but after talking with Kathleen Jones, I can see how rewarding it is. She practical glows when she talks about the progress her students have made. It is essential that ELLs learn to read and write in English for their future success and to follow their chosen career paths. Learning English can be life changing for these students, and I would be overjoyed to facilitate that process.